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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT FOR
2009/2010, Sri Lanka

REF: STATE 97228

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¶1. Per reftel, below is the 2009/10 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report for Sri Lanka. The INCSR for the Maldives will be transmitted septel.

SUMMARY --

¶2. Sri Lanka has a relatively small-scale drug problem. The Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) remains committed to targeting drug traffickers and implementing nation-wide demand reduction programs. Since early 2005, the U.S. government has fostered a strengthened relationship with Sri Lanka on counternarcotics issues by offering training for the Sri Lanka Police. Sri Lanka is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, ratifying key legislation in October, 2007.

STATUS OF COUNTRY --

¶3. Sri Lanka is not a significant producer of narcotics or precursor chemicals and plays a minor role as a transshipment route for heroin from India. GSL officials work to raise internal awareness of and vigilance against efforts by drug traffickers attempting to use Sri Lanka as a transit point for illicit drug smuggling. Domestically, officials are addressing a modest upsurge in domestic consumption, consisting of heroin, cannabis, and to a lesser extent, Ecstasy.

COUNTRY ACTIONS AGAINST DRUGS IN 2009 --
POLICY INITIATIVES

¶4. The lead agency for counternarcotics efforts is the Police Narcotics Bureau (PNB), headquartered in the capital city of Colombo. The GSL remains committed to ongoing efforts to curb illicit drug use and trafficking.

¶5. In the past year, the PNB recruited more officers, resulting in increased investigations and interdictions, and deployed field officers in strategic locations along the coastal belts where drug trafficking is active. The PNB also conducted in-service counternarcotics training for police outside of the conflict-affected north and east and drug awareness programs in schools on a regular basis. Over the past year, 22 drug prevention and enforcement officials from Sri Lanka participated in regional training opportunities.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

¶6. The PNB and Excise Department worked closely to target cannabis producers and dealers, resulting in several successful arrests. The PNB warmly welcomed and has been an active partner in taking full advantage of U.S.-sponsored training for criminal investigative techniques and management practices in the past.

¶7. Sri Lanka continued to work with the Colombo Plan Drug Advisory

Program, a regional organization, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on regional narcotics issues. The SAARC Drug Offense Monitoring Desk (S India and Pakistan, origin countries for the majority of drugs in Sri Lanka.

LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

18. The PNB continued to cooperate closely with the Customs Service, the Department of Excise, and the Sri Lankan Police to curtail illicit drug supplies in and through the country. As a result of these efforts, over the last 12 months GSL officials arrested 4,346 persons on charges of using or dealing heroin and 8,540 persons on cannabis charges. This represents an enormous drop from last year's 9,825 and 33,848 arrests respectively, most likely a result of the GSL's single-minded effort to end the thirty-year war against the LTTE. Police seized a total of 30 kg of heroin and 55,244 kg of cannabis during this last reporting period. Arrests are done by the Police Narcotics Bureau, local police, Terrorism Investigation

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Division (TID), Criminal Investigation Division (CID), Customs, Excise Department, Forest Department, Prisons Department and the Navy.

19. Apart from its Colombo headquarters, the PNB has one sub-unit at the Bandaranaike International Airport near Colombo, complete with operational personnel and a team of narcotics-detecting dogs. A Nepalese national was arrested at the airport in January attempting to smuggle 1 1/2 kilos of heroin from Thailand. In May a Pakistani man and three women were detected attempting to smuggle 284 packs of heroin concealed in condoms, which they had swallowed. In June, an Indian woman was detected attempting to smuggle in a large quantity of cocaine valued at Rs. 7 million.

CORRUPTION

10. The GSL does not, as a matter of policy, encourage or facilitate the illicit production or distribution of any controlled substances or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. A government commission established to investigate bribery and corruption charges against public officials that resumed operations in 2004 continued through 2009, although with little activity. There are unconfirmed reports of links between drug traffickers and individual corrupt officials. However, since late 2007, there have been no arrests of government officials on bribery or corruption charges related to drugs.

AGREEMENTS AND TREATIES

11. Sri Lanka is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention and the 1990 SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Over the past year, Parliament passed amendments to the Convention Against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances. Sri Lanka is a party to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and has signed, but not yet ratified, the Protocol on Trafficking in Persons and the Protocol on Migrant Smuggling. Sri Lanka is also a party to the UN Convention against Corruption. An extradition treaty is in force between the U.S. and Sri Lanka. A U.S.-Sri Lanka extradition treaty has been in force since January 12, 2001. The GSL also signed an agreement with the Russian Federation to cooperate more closely on extradition cases.

CULTIVATION/PRODUCTION

12. Some cannabis is cultivated and used locally, but there is little indication that it is exported. The majority of cannabis cultivation occurs in the southeast jungles of Sri Lanka. PNB and Excise Department officials work together to locate and eradicate cannabis crops. One clandestine laboratory making synthetic drugs was raided in July 2008, but none since then.

DRUG FLOW/TRANSIT

13. The military defeat of the LTTE in May, 2009, may have changed the dynamics of the drug trade in Asia. Since 1983, the LTTE was involved in bulk delivery of heroin and cannabis from producing areas in Asia to consuming countries. Mumbai was the key link in the LTTE drug trade. While Sri Lanka's coast remains highly vulnerable to transshipment of heroin moving from India, observers

expect a dramatic reduction in drug-related activity in the region.

¶14. Police officials state that the international airport is a major entry point for the transshipment of illegal narcotics through Sri Lanka. Police note that the Ecstasy found in Colombo social venues is believed to be imported from Thailand.

DOMESTIC PROGRAMS/DEMAND REDUCTION

¶15. The Police Narcotics Bureau, the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board (NDDCB) and the several NGOs are carrying out awareness and education programs at schools and for special

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populations. The Sri Lanka Anti Narcotics Association is working on minimizing risk factors and is working on a platform of information technology for the empowerment of youth populations on employability and parenting through the internet, particularly for overseas workers and their families. The Presidential Unit on Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs is using enforcement tactics with a tilt towards prohibition for the eradication of drugs. The NDDCB regularly conducted outreach among employee groups, school children and teachers, and community leaders.

U.S. POLICY INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS -- POLICY INITIATIVES

¶16. The USG remained committed to helping GSL officials develop increased capacity and cooperation for counternarcotics issues. The USG also continued its support of a regional counternarcotics program, including through the Colombo Plan, which conducts regional and country-specific training seminars, fostering communication and cooperation throughout Asia. Towards that end, the U.S. Coast Guard provided residential training to Sri Lankan officers in the areas of International Crisis, Command and Control, as well as residential training in Seaport Security.

ROAD AHEAD

¶17. The U.S. government will continue its commitment to aid the Sri Lankan police in its transition to community-focused policing techniques. This will be accomplished with additional assistance for training. The U.S. also expects to continue its support of regional and country-specific training programs. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration attach based in New Delhi visited Colombo in November 2009 to coordinate anti-drug trafficking activities with the local police and the Embassy. The DEA attach also met with the Interagency Law Enforcement Working Group at post.

FOWLER